

Handout 8-H

The Return of the Exiles

A summary of the four major stages in the Judeans' return from the Exile:

1. Shechbazzar led some of the exiled Jews back to Judah in 538 BC. Zerubbabal began rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem, but the Samaritans prevented them from finishing it. (The Samaritans believed that God can be worshipped anywhere, that the Israelites didn't need a Temple.)
2. Zerubbabel (a member of the family of David) led another group back to Judah. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to continue building the Temple. Jeshua (from a prominent priestly family) completed the new Temple in 515. (This Temple stood until 19 BC, when Herod built a third Temple.) The second Temple may have had nearly the same dimensions as the Temple of Solomon.
3. Ezra, a priest, led another group of exiles back to Judah in either 458 or 398 BC. Ezra brought with him a copy of the Mosaic Law and urged the people to follow it.
4. Nehemiah led a fourth group of exiles back to Judah in 445 BC. He was appointed governor of Judah and built walls around Jerusalem. He, along with Ezra, implemented reforms in worship.